

IN THE CLAIMS

Please substitute Claims 1, 7, 46, 52, 58, 59, 62, 64, 67, 73, 80, 81, 82 and 84 with the following amended claims; cancel claim 85 and add new claim 90.

1. [Currently amended] An on-line, interactive web site information system for increasing access to localized business and markets, the system having one of more functions for displaying advertising, information and business listings and referring users such as shoppers or merchants to the web sites of merchants listed with respect to certain selected geographic locations such as town and cities, and certain categories, comprising:

means for substantially automated creation and ~~posting~~ entry of said business listings and advertising by users of said system, wherein the users have direct access to modify, add or remove the business listings and advertising;

means for substantially automated selection by said merchants of said categories and said selected geographic locations wherein said advertising, information and/or business listings will appear so as to enable geographic targeting of said users of said system;

means for displaying said advertising, information and/or business listings for a duration of time;

means for viewing said advertising, information and/or business listings based on the selection by the user of at least one of said selected geographic locations and at least one of said categories in which the merchant advertisements, business listings and/or information is displayed;

means for linking said advertising, business listings and/or information to the web pages of others;

at least one-hyper link corresponding to a category to link users to the web site of at least one merchant;

means for building databases from the information provided by users of the system;

means for recording and providing account review information to users of the system;

means for users to access the system to add and delete said information, business listings and advertisements for display on the system;

extended services means;

means for recording statistics about usage of the system;

marketing analysis means for monitoring activity among the various functions of the system; and

means for generating revenue through the selection by the merchants of one or more of said functions.

2. [Previously amended] The invention according to Claim 1 wherein said system further comprises accounting means for keeping track of the revenues generated by the system and any commissions owed to others.

3. [Original] The invention according to Claim 1 wherein said system further comprises means for substantially automated updating of said business listings, advertising and information.

4. [Original] The invention according to Claim 1 wherein said system further includes means for substantially automated, on-line payment for said business listings, information and advertising.

5. [Previously amended] The invention according to Claim 1 wherein said system further comprises means for substantially automated display of coupons for a selected time period.

6. [Original] The invention according to Claim 5 wherein said coupons automatically stop being displayed upon the expiration of said time period.

7. [Currently amended] The invention according to Claim 1 wherein said system further comprises means for substantially automated display of advertising for a selected time period.

8. [Original] The invention according to Claim 7 wherein said advertising automatically stops being displayed upon the expiration of said time period.

9. [Previously amended]. An on-line, interactive web site information system having one of more functions for displaying advertising, information and business listings and referring users such as shoppers or merchants to the web sites of merchants listed with respect to certain geographic locations such as towns and cities, and certain categories, comprising:

means for substantially automated creation of said business listings and advertising by users of said system;

means for substantially automated selection by said merchant of said categories and said geographic locations wherein said advertising, information and/or business listings will appear so as to enable geographic targeting of said users of said system;

means for displaying said advertising, information and/or business listings;

means for viewing said advertising, information and/or business listings based on the selection by the user of at least one of said geographic locations and at least one of said categories in which the merchant advertisements, business listings and/or information is displayed;

means for linking said advertising, business listings and/or information to the web pages of others;

at least one-hyper link corresponding to a category to link users to the web site of at least one merchant;

means for building databases from the information provided by users of the system;

means for recording and providing account review information to users of the system;

means for users to add and delete said information, business listings and advertisements for display on the system;

means for selecting the towns and categories in which to display said advertising, business listings and information;

extended services means;

means for recording statistics about usage of the system;

marketing analysis means for monitoring activity among the various functions of the system;

means for generating revenue from said usage of said system comprising:

[a.] fees from merchants for listing their web sites in specific geographic locations;

[b.] fees from banner ads displayed in specific geographic locations;

[c.] fees from coupons made available in specific geographic locations;

[d.] fees from for sale listings displayed in specific geographic locations; and

[e.] fees from extended service; and

accounting means for keeping track of the revenue created by the system and any commissions owed to others.

10. [Previously amended] The invention according to Claim 1 wherein said system further comprises providing different levels of passwords to different users of the system.

11. [Previously amended] The invention according to Claim 9 wherein said for sale listings further include means to offer items for sale on a best offer basis.

12. [Original] The invention according to Claim 1 wherein said hyper-link comprises an area simulating the appearance of a button that can be selected.

13. [Original] The invention according to Claim 12 wherein said hyper-link further appears to be lit up when links to business web pages exist for said category.

14. [Original] The invention according to Claim 1 wherein said hyper-link further comprises means for indicating that there are no links to business web pages in a given category.

15. [Previously amended] The invention according to Claim 14 wherein said means for indicating that there are no links to business web pages in a given category comprises an area having the appearance of a darkened button.

16 – 45. [Cancelled].

46. [Currently amended] An on-line, interactive web site information system for increasing access to localized business and markets, the system allowing information to be inputted by merchants and other users and accessed by consumers based on selected localized geographic areas and topical categories, the system comprising:

one or more Internet web pages that allows the merchants and consumers to select from a plurality of topical categories in a plurality of localized geographic areas to input or view localized information ~~having information organized into a hierarchy of geographic areas, wherein the geographic areas include at least one geographic area of large expanse and a plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse organized into a plurality of topical categories;~~

a web server for displaying the one or more Internet web pages;

means for the merchants to input the information into the system for viewing by the consumers on ~~onto~~ the one or more Internet web pages using a substantially automated process, wherein the means for inputting the information comprises means for

selecting the localized geographic areas and topical categories to list and/or display the information, and wherein the merchant has direct access to modify, add or remove the information;

means for the consumers to select at least one of the topical categories in at least one of the plurality of localized geographic areas ~~of smaller expanse~~;

means for displaying the information to the consumers based on the selected at least one of the topical categories in the at least one of the plurality of localized geographic areas ~~of smaller expanse~~;

means for monitoring usage of the system;

means for providing statistics regarding the usage of the system; and

means for generating revenue based on the information inputted by the merchants.

47. [Previously added] The system of Claim 46, wherein the information includes business advertising.

48. [Previously added] The system of Claim 46, wherein the information includes coupons.

49. [Previously added] The system of Claim 48, wherein the coupons are of limited duration.

50 - 51. [Cancelled]

52. [Currently amended] The system of Claim [[51]] 46 which further comprises means for calculating fees based on the usage of the system.

53. [Previously added] The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means to limit access to the information.

54. [Previously added] The system of Claim 53 wherein the limiting means comprises a password required to access the information.

55. [Previously added] The system of Claim 46, wherein the information includes job postings.

56. [Previously added] The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means for providing extended services.

57. [Previously added] The system of Claim 56 wherein the extended services include allowing commercial transactions.

58. [Currently amended] The system of Claim 46 wherein the at least one of the plurality of localized geographic areas ~~of smaller-expanse-area~~ is selected by town name.

59. [Previously added] The system of Claim 46 wherein the at least one of the plurality of localized geographic areas ~~of smaller-expanse-area~~ is selected by zip code.

60. [Previously amended] The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means for the consumers to directly contact the merchants.

61. [Previously amended] The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means to allow for commercial transactions between the merchants and the consumers.

62. [Currently amended] The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means for the consumers to list items for sale, wherein the consumers select at least one topical category and at least one localized geographic area ~~of smaller expanse~~ in which to list the items.

63. [Previously added] The system of Claim 46 which further comprises hyperlinks to allow the consumers to access websites of the merchants.

64. [Currently amended] A method for providing an on-line interactive web site for referring a consumer to one or more merchants or other users and for increasing access to localized business and markets, the system comprising;

providing one or more web pages that allows the merchants and consumers to select from at least one topical category in a plurality of localized geographic areas to input or view localized information ~~containing information organized into a hierarchy of geographic areas, wherein the hierarchy of geographic areas includes at least one geographic area of large expanse and a plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse organized into at least one topical category;~~

providing means for the one or more merchants to connect to at least one web page of the one or more web pages;

allowing the one or more merchants to select at least one of the localized geographic areas and at least one of the ~~at least one~~ topical categories^{[[y]]} to list or display information pertaining to the one or more merchants;

allowing the one or more merchants to input information into the system for viewing by the consumers on ~~into~~ the one or more web pages through a substantially automated process, wherein the information is ~~posted~~ accessible on the one or more web pages under the localized geographic areas and topical categories selected by the one or more merchants, and wherein the merchant has direct access to modify, add or remove the information;

connecting the consumer to the one or more web pages;

allowing the consumer to select ~~the~~ at least one topical category from ~~the~~ at least one localized geographic area ~~of smaller expanse from the hierarchy of geographic areas;~~

displaying the merchant information in response to the geographic area and topical category selected by the consumer;

monitoring the information that is accessed;

providing statistics regarding the information accessed; and

generating revenue based on the information that is inputted by the merchants.

65 – 66. [Cancelled]

67. [Currently amended] The method of Claim ^{[[65]]} 64 wherein the method further comprises the step of calculating fees based on the information accessed.

68. [Previously added] The method of Claim 64 wherein the method further comprises the step of providing extended services.

69. [Previously amended] The method of Claim 68 wherein the step of providing extended services comprises providing commercial transactions between the merchants and the consumers.

70. [Previously added] The method of Claim 64 wherein the method further comprises the step of prompting for a password to access the information.

71. [Previously added] The method of Claim 64 wherein the information includes at least one coupon.

72. [Previously added] The method of Claim 71 which further comprises the step of providing a set time period for the at least one coupon to be listed on at least one of the series of web pages, wherein the at least one coupon will automatically expire upon expiration of the set time period.

73. [Currently amended] The method of Claim 64 which further comprises the step of generating revenue from the one or more merchants for listing the merchant information in the ~~hierarchy~~ of geographic areas and topical categories.

74. [Previously added] The method of Claim 64 which further comprises the step of providing means for the one or more merchants to update or edit the merchant information.

75. [Previously added] The method of Claim 64 which further comprises the step of providing means for the consumers to access websites of the one or more merchants.

76. [Previously added] The invention according to Claim 9 wherein said system further comprises providing different levels of passwords to different users of the system.

77. [Previously added] The invention according to Claim 9 wherein said hyper-link comprises an area simulating the appearance of a button that can be selected

78. [Previously added] The invention according to Claim 77 wherein said hyper-link further appears to be lit up when links to business web pages exist for said category.

79. [Previously added] The invention according to Claim 9 wherein said hyper-link further comprises means for indicating that there are no links to business web pages in a given category.

80. [Currently amended] An on-line, interactive web site information system for allowing information to be inputted by merchants and other users and accessed by consumers based on localized geographic areas and topical categories, the system comprising:

one or more Internet web pages having information organized into ~~a hierarchy of geographic areas, wherein the geographic areas include at least one geographic area of large expanse and~~ a plurality of localized geographic areas ~~of smaller expanse~~ organized into a plurality of topical categories;

a web server for displaying the one or more Internet web pages;

means for the merchants to input the information onto the one or more Internet web pages through a substantially automated process, wherein the means for inputting the information comprises means for selecting the geographic areas and topical categories to list and/or display the information;

means for the consumers to select at least one of the topical categories in at least one of the plurality of localized geographic areas ~~of smaller-expanse~~;

means for displaying the information to the consumer based on the selected at least one of the topical categories in the at least one of the plurality of localized geographic areas ~~of smaller-expanse~~;

means for monitoring usage of the system;

means for providing statistics regarding the usage of the system; and

means for generating revenue based on the information inputted by the merchants comprising:

fees from merchants for listing their web sites in ~~specific~~ the localized geographic areas ~~towns~~; and

fees from coupons made available in ~~specific~~ the localized geographic areas ~~towns~~.

81. [Currently amended] The system of claim 80 wherein the means for the consumers to select at least one of the topical categories in at least one of the plurality of localized geographic areas ~~of smaller-expanse~~ comprises drill-down menus.

82. [Currently amended] The system of claim 46 wherein the means for the consumers to select at least one of the topical categories in at least one of the plurality of localized geographic areas ~~of smaller expanse~~ comprises drill-down menus.

83. [Previously added] The method of claim 64 wherein the geographic areas and topical categories are provided in drill-down menus.

84. [Currently amended] The system of claim 1 wherein the creation and ~~posting~~ entry of said business listings and advertising by users of said system occurs in real time.

85. [Canceled]

86. [Previously added] The method of claim 64 wherein the inputting of the information occurs in real time.

87. [Previously added] The system of claim 46 wherein the information comprises business listings.

88. [Previously added] The method of claim 64 wherein the information comprises business listings.

89. [Previously added] The system of claim 80 wherein the information comprises business listings.

90. [New] The system of claim 46 wherein the inputting of the information into the system occurs in substantially real time.